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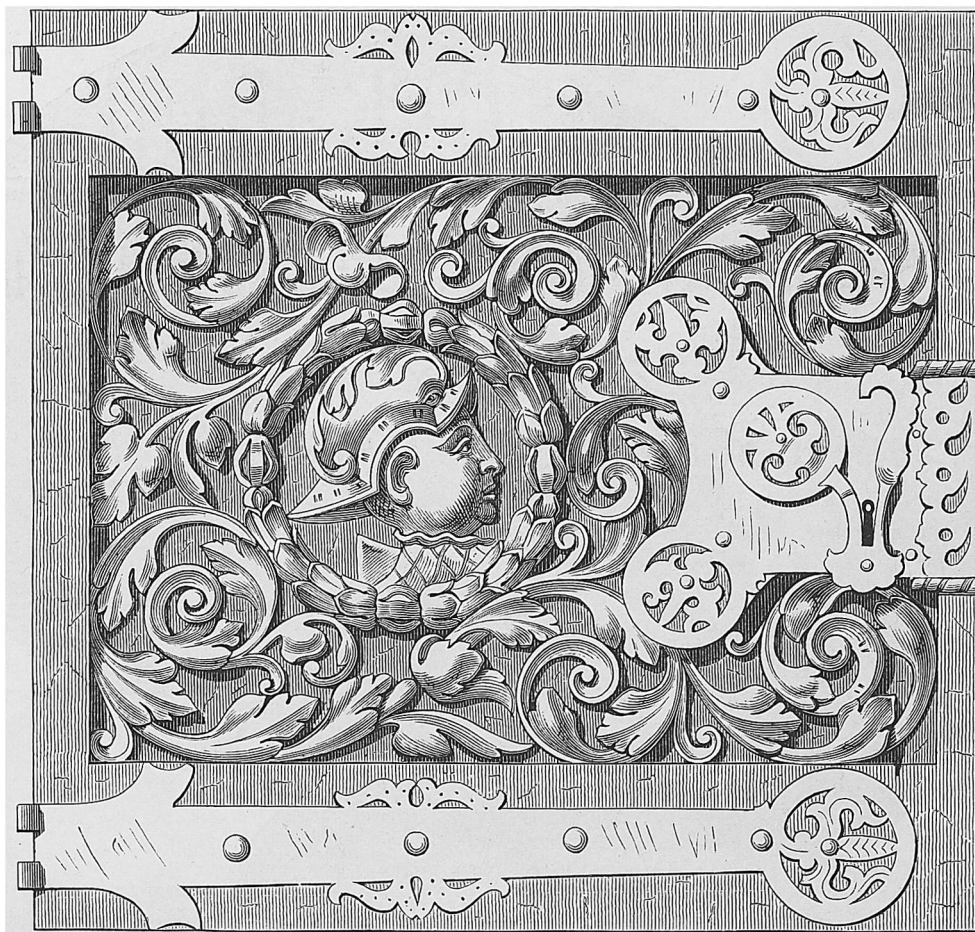
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No. 22. Lock and Hinges of Cabinet. German Renaissance; from the drawing of Prof. A. Ortwein, Graz.

VARIOUS.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST FIRE.

Captain Shaw, in his interesting report on the London fires of 1873, calls attention to a point of considerable and growing importance — namely, the enormous height to which buildings are now erected without any adequate precautions for the safety of life in the upper stories. He points out that the fire-escapes at present in use can under no circumstances reach higher than 50 feet, and he therefore thinks that persons living at a height much greater, should make their own arrangements for getting down externally to spots within reach of ladders or other aids available from the outside. For this purpose he suggests two plans — one, that external iron ladders should be affixed to buildings, reaching from the roof to within forty feet of the ground; the other, to provide every large structure with continuous balconies of wrought iron on each storey, the various balconies to communicate with each other by means of external stairs. Captain Shaw states two reasons why owners of premises would object to such safeguards — namely, that inmates and servants would get outside too frequently, and that thieves would be enabled to get inside too easily; and he might have added a third reason, the expense. But after all it is a choice of evils; and, as the Chief of the Brigade says, if persons will neglect safeguards against fire, they must be prepared to accept the consequences.

The objections, however, are really anything but formidable, and Captain Shaw might have answered them as soon as they were stated. The danger arising from inmates getting outside too often is one that already exists, for the greater number of our modern

houses have balconies that are fruitful causes of accidents, and the question is whether they shall be safe and useful, or insecure and worthless for any purpose but that of popularising peculiar notions of ornament. Such balconies as those which Captain Shaw recommends would be much safer than the existing flimsy constructions, and they would also avail to provide egress in case of fire. As for burglars, the risk of their passing from one balcony to another, and so entering a house, might be obviated by making the ladder movable, and raising it at nightfall. However the difficulty may be met, it is one that we must face some day, for in such a city as London, where land becomes more valuable every hour, houses are likely to gain constantly in elevation. As we cannot enlarge the area, or burrow underground, we must go skyward; and that, in fact, we are doing. The change will bring us face to face with more than one social problem, and that of safety from fire will have to be solved with others.

ARTIFICIAL ASPHALTE.

The object of the invention of W. A. Bresson of Bermoudsey, is the production of a substitute for natural rock asphalt by prompt and economical means, so that calcareous stones, being heated to a certain degree, and then subjected to the treatment described in the specification, can afterwards, being ground to powder and sufficiently heated, and then compressed by hot metal runners, form good roads, floors, and all similar applications.